

## 4. Gender and Conjugal Relations

権利	Copyrights 日本貿易振興機構（ジェトロ）アジア 経済研究所 / Institute of Developing Economies, Japan External Trade Organization (IDE-JETRO) <a href="http://www.ide.go.jp">http://www.ide.go.jp</a>
シリーズタイトル(英 )	Occasional Papers Series
シリーズ番号	37
journal or publication title	The Cocoa Farmers of Southern Ghana
page range	61-84
year	2002
URL	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2344/00010656">http://hdl.handle.net/2344/00010656</a>

# 4

## Gender and Conjugal Relations

In this chapter the relationship between cocoa production and gender will be analyzed, with particular emphasis on rights relating to labor and land. The analysis will be based on the following four perspectives.

First, there are multiple economic units within a household. In rural areas of Ghana, a household that functions as a single production, consumption and income-pooling unit is the exception rather than the norm. There is a strong tendency for individual household members to have separate farms from other household members and to function as independent farm managers. The assumptions that resources are pooled within households, and that households maximize utility by making decisions as if they were individuals<sup>1</sup> is therefore inappropriate for analyses of cases in Ghana. The approach taken in this chapter is to clarify the relationships between gender and production by examining the various socioeconomic relationships that exist *within* households, rather than taking the household as the smallest unit for analysis.

Second, economic relationships within households are based on the coexistence of conflict and cooperation, and contractual transactions and altruism. The supply of a wife's labor to husband's farm, for example, may be a form of altruism based on cooperation and mutual reliance. On the other hand, it is also true that a wife expect some form of reward, such as future gifting of the farm, from the labor she contributes to a husband's farm. There are also cases in which income from the husband's farm is shared between husband and wife according to clearly defined percentages set in advance. Such intra-household

relations cannot adequately be understood simply as a world of altruistic and cooperative behavior among family members, or as a world in which exchanges are carried out solely on the basis of contractual relationships. Instead they are a complex of interrelationships in which interpersonal conflict and cooperation coexist alongside contractual exchanges and the unconditional provision of goods and services based on altruism.

Third, the distribution of land rights within a household has a major influence on socioeconomic relationships among household members. In cocoa-producing communities, the landholding units are individuals or lineages, and there are no cases where land is held jointly by a married couple. Those who hold land rights within the household can therefore exercise greater control over household labor and income deriving from farm products.

Fourth, women farmers, far from being a homogenous group, exhibit a variety of socioeconomic differences. Most previous studies on gender and cocoa production in Ghana have focused on the various disparities between male and female farmers, and comparatively little work has been done regarding disparities among women farmers. In this chapter a number of important differences among female farmers will be clarified, particularly with regard to such factors as women's marital status, age, degree of labor contribution to husbands' farms, and allocation of land rights within households.

## **I. Gender and Land Rights**

Land and labor are the most important factors that affect the economic well-being of cocoa farmers in southern Ghana. This section and the next examine these two factors in turn from the four perspectives described above. In this section, I first outline the characteristics of conjugal relations in rural southern Ghana. This is followed by an analysis of the landholding patterns and the sources of land acquisition. The main finding is that although women are not excluded from acquiring land rights, many of them rely on husbands to obtain land rights. This seems to be one factor that causes uncertainty and insecurity concerning women's land rights.

### **1. Separateness and Jointness of Spouses**

Conjugal relations in rural southern Ghana can be characterized by both separateness and jointness in various socioeconomic activities. Separateness and jointness coexist both in everyday life and in agricultural production. This will be discussed from four aspects: patterns of residence, consumption, production, and income pooling.

Duo-local marriage, in which husbands and wives live separately after

marriage, is widespread among the matrilineal Akan in southern Ghana. In the study villages, however, most spouses live in the same compounds. Two factors may explain the dominance of co-residence. The first is the heterogeneous ethnic composition of the study villages. Some residents of Bepoase and Gyaha are patrilineal Akuapem (44 and 28 per cent, respectively), and other patrilineal groups (Ga, Ewe, and Krobo) also reside in the two villages. In Nagore and Gyaha, however, there are some cases (23 and 18 per cent, respectively) in which husbands and wives stay in separate compounds. The percentage of duo-local marriage is higher in Nagore, where the majority (80 per cent) of residents are matrilineal Asante. The second factor is that all three study villages are migrant communities in which the residents live far away from their hometowns. In such cases traditional duo-local residence is not always practiced. Also, in migrant communities, husband and wife usually do farm work together because they cannot expect any labor contribution from kin members back in the hometowns. Thus the condition of being a migrant seems to promote stronger conjugal cooperation in farming.

Even if husbands and wives live separately, they maintain some degree of unity in everyday consumption. It is a social norm that wives prepare food for husbands who stay in separate compounds. It is also a social norm that husbands provide money for the necessary foodstuff, clothes, and medical care for household members, and pay for children's school fees (although in reality wives often have to make a contribution to pay for everyday necessities). In this way, husbands and wives form the same consumption units.

In contrast to jointness in consumption, husbands and wives in many cases do not form single production units or income-pooling units.<sup>2</sup> Land and farms are not held jointly. If husband and wife have separate farms, each farm is managed independently and the incomes are also kept individually.<sup>3</sup> Even when a wife is allowed to establish her own farm on her husband's land, she usually has some degree of control over farm management and farm products. This separateness in production and income pooling also applies to other members of the family, especially their mature children. It is therefore not unusual that household members form different farming units and have separate income streams.

## **2. Gender Disparity in Land Rights**

Gender differences are not clearly reflected in the percentages of male and female landholders. As is apparent from Table 3-1 in Chapter 3, the percentage of female landholders was higher in Bepoase and Nagore, but male landholders were in the majority in Gyaha. An important difference, however, is that large-scale landholders are mostly men in all three villages (Table 4-1).<sup>4</sup>

TABLE 4-1  
DISTRIBUTION OF LANDHOLDING SIZE BY SEX AND AGE

						(%)
By Age	Land Area (Ha)					Total
	Under 1	1–4	5–9	10 or Over	Unknown	
A. Bepoase						
Male ( <i>N</i> = 35)						
20–29	17	9	0	3	6	34
30–39	9	9	0	3	3	23
40–49	3	11	0	3	3	20
50–59	0	0	0	9	0	9
60–	0	3	3	9	0	14
Total	29	31	3	26	11	100
Female ( <i>N</i> = 23)						
20–29	13	0	0	0	0	13
30–39	22	9	0	4	0	35
40–49	4	4	0	0	0	9
50–59	4	4	4	0	0	13
60–	9	22	0	0	0	30
Total	52	39	4	4	0	100
Grand total ( <i>N</i> = 58)	38	34	3	17	7	100
B. Nagore						
Male ( <i>N</i> = 40)						
20–29	0	5	0	0	0	5
30–39	3	10	3	0	0	15
40–49	3	10	3	3	3	20
50–59	0	10	5	10	0	25
60–	3	18	10	3	3	35
Total	8	53	20	15	5	100
Female ( <i>N</i> = 41)						
20–29	0	10	0	0	0	10
30–39	2	12	2	0	0	17
40–49	5	24	0	0	0	29
50–59	5	10	0	2	0	17
60–	5	12	7	2	0	27
Total	17	68	10	5	0	100
Grand total ( <i>N</i> = 81)	12	60	15	10	2	100
C. Gyaha						
Male ( <i>N</i> = 46)						
20–29	4	2	2	2	0	11
30–39	4	4	2	4	0	15
40–49	2	9	7	4	0	22
50–59	2	7	4	11	0	24
60–	2	7	9	11	0	29
Total	15	28	24	33	0	100

TABLE 4-1 (Continued)

By Age	Land Area (Ha)					Total
	Under 1	1-4	5-9	10 or Over	Unknown	
Female ( <i>N</i> = 26)						
20-29	8	0	0	0	0	8
30-39	15	8	0	0	0	23
40-49	4	23	4	8	0	38
50-59	0	8	0	0	0	8
60-	4	12	4	4	0	23
Total	31	50	8	12	0	100
Grand total ( <i>N</i> = 72)	21	37	18	25	0	100

- Notes: 1. *N* = number of farmers interviewed.  
 2. Because of the effects of rounding, totals do not always add exactly.

Because of this concentration of large-scale land parcels among men, larger farms are managed mostly by male farmers. As a result, the highest production level of cocoa is enjoyed mostly by male farmers. The distribution of the levels of cocoa production (Table 4-2) shows that, except in Nagore, large-scale producers (producing twenty bags or more) are all men. On the other hand, most of the female farmers in the three study villages are small-scale producers with harvests of less than ten bags.

Gender disparity can also be seen in the method of acquiring usufruct rights to land. Among the farmers interviewed, 160 male farmers (59 per cent) obtained usufruct rights to land through share contracts, while only 37 female farmers (18 per cent) did (Table 4-3). At least two factors could account for this difference. One is time constraints on women. They are culturally obliged to do most of the reproductive work such as housework and child rearing (Oppong and Abu 1987), resulting in less time available for productive work such as farming. Another factor is that landlords, when making share contracts, generally prefer male farmers because of their physical strength.

### 3. Conjugal Relationships and Land Rights

For many wives who do not hold their own land, a husband is an important means of acquiring land rights. As shown in Tables 3-2 through 3-4 in Chapter 3, many female farmers acquired land as a gift or by inheritance from their husbands. The transfer of land from a husband to a wife is done mainly as a reward for the labor that the wife contributed to the husband's farms. The transfer of land can be done as a gift while the husband is still alive. In such cases, the consent of the husband's kin, as well as customary gifts of a bottle

TABLE 4-2  
DISTRIBUTION OF COCOA YIELDS BY LANDHOLDER SEX AND AGE

							(%)
By Age	Yields (Bag)						Total
	0	Under 10	10–19	20–29	30 or Over	Unknown	
A. Bepoase							
Male ( <i>N</i> = 35)							
20–29	23	9	3	0	0	0	34
30–39	9	9	6	0	0	0	23
40–49	0	11	3	6	0	0	20
50–59	0	0	0	0	9	0	9
60–	0	3	3	6	3	0	14
Total	31	31	14	11	11	0	100
Female ( <i>N</i> = 23)							
20–29	13	0	0	0	0	0	13
30–39	26	9	0	0	0	0	35
40–49	9	0	0	0	0	0	9
50–59	0	9	4	0	0	0	13
60–	4	22	4	0	0	0	30
Total	52	39	9	0	0	0	100
Grand total ( <i>N</i> = 58)	40	34	12	7	7	0	100
B. Nagore							
Male ( <i>N</i> = 40)							
20–29	3	3	0	0	0	0	5
30–39	0	8	8	0	0	0	15
40–49	3	8	5	0	5	0	20
50–59	3	10	5	0	5	3	25
60–	3	15	8	5	3	3	35
Total	10	43	25	5	13	5	100
Female ( <i>N</i> = 41)							
20–29	2	7	0	0	0	0	10
30–39	2	10	5	0	0	0	17
40–49	7	15	2	0	5	0	29
50–59	2	15	0	0	0	0	17
60–	2	12	0	7	2	2	27
Total	17	59	7	7	7	2	100
Grand total ( <i>N</i> = 81)	14	51	16	6	10	4	100
C. Gyaha							
Male ( <i>N</i> = 46)							
20–29	2	4	2	0	2	0	11
30–39	0	2	7	4	2	0	16
40–49	0	7	7	7	2	0	22
50–59	0	9	7	7	0	0	22
60–	0	11	7	4	4	4	29
Total	2	33	29	22	11	4	100

TABLE 4-2 (Continued)

By Age	Yields (Bag)						Total
	0	Under 10	10–19	20–29	30 or Over	Unknown	
Female ( <i>N</i> = 26)							
20–29	4	0	4	0	0	0	8
30–39	8	15	0	0	0	0	23
40–49	4	27	8	0	0	0	38
50–59	0	8	0	0	0	0	8
60–	4	19	0	0	0	0	23
Total	19	69	12	0	0	0	100
<hr/>							
Grand total ( <i>N</i> = 72)	8	46	22	14	7	3	100

- Notes: 1. One bag = 64 kilograms.  
 2. *N* = number of farmers interviewed.  
 3. Because of the effects of rounding, percentages of total do not always add exactly.

TABLE 4-3  
NUMBER OF SHARE TENANTS BY SEX

Village	Male			Female			Total		
	<i>N</i>	No. of Tenants	%	<i>N</i>	No. of Tenants	%	<i>N</i>	No. of Tenants	%
Bepoase	55	25	45	32	3	9	87	28	32
Nagore	90	55	61	62	12	19	152	67	44
Gyaha	128	80	63	107	22	21	235	102	43
Total	273	160	59	201	37	18	474	197	42

- Notes: 1. Wives using land contracted by their husbands are not covered.  
 2. *N* = number of farmers interviewed.

of gin and a sheep, is necessary. In some cases, when a husband dies intestate, his kin may recognize the wife's contributions to his farm(s) and decide to give some parts of the land to the wife.

Wives also acquire usufruct rights to land from or through husbands. Many wives are allowed to use a husband's land to grow food crops for household consumption. Some wives have the right to dispose of the products and can keep the cash for themselves. Others are allowed to plant cocoa on a husband's land, enjoying full control over the management of and income from the cocoa farms. In yet other cases, when a male *yemayenkye* tenant dies, the wife inherits the share contract from her husband, thus becoming an independent farm manager. There are also cases where wives subcontract part of the



contracted land (independently from the husband) while the husband is still alive (Case 4-1). In such cases, the wife uses her conjugal relationship with her husband to acquire a contractual relationship with a third party.

There is thus a strong tendency for women to rely on their conjugal relationships with their husbands when acquiring rights over land. If a good conjugal relationship is maintained, and if the woman is seen to be contributing in various ways, including the provision of labor, she has the opportunity to become a landholder in the future when she obtains land as a gift or by inheritance from her husband. Women also have opportunities to become independent farmers when they are granted shares of usufruct rights held by their husband (Case 4-2). The social relationship of marriage thus plays an important role in improving women's opportunities to acquire land rights, and hence to improve their economic status.

On the other hand, because a woman's opportunities to acquire land rights from her husband depend on their personal relationship, her land rights are not secure (Whitehead 1985, p. 54). It all depends on the intentions of the husband. Continued marriage is a prerequisite for a husband's decisions to transfer land rights to a wife, but divorces are not rare in rural Ghana. If the marital relationship is terminated by divorce or death, the wife's right to land is also terminated (Case 4-3).<sup>5</sup> Moreover, even if the husband himself is willing to make such a gift, there can be problems regarding the willingness of the husband's kin group to approve the gift (Case 4-4). The acquisition of land rights on the basis of conjugal relationships thus involves considerable uncertainty because of such factors as the continuity of the marriage, the intentions of the husband, and the approval of husband's kin.

#### **4. Distribution of Land Rights from Men to Women**

Women thus face considerable uncertainty in the acquisition of land, and the amount of land acquired tends to be small compared with that held by men. However, the transfer of land from men to women is increasing. Earlier studies often refer to the concentration of land in the hands of males through the land transfer process. For example, Mikell (1984) observed from a survey in the Sunyani District in the early 1970s that female-owned cocoa farms were gradually falling into men's hands. In addition, male-owned cocoa farms were being inherited by male successors, resulting in a concentration of cocoa farms under male ownership. This is not the case in the three villages studied by the present writer, as many women have acquired land from fathers and husbands (Chapter 3, Tables 3-2 through 3-4). When land rights are transferred from fathers to offspring as a gift or by inheritance, land is often divided and shared by both sons and daughters. In Gyaha, for example, in 50

per cent of the cases where fathers gave land to their children, both sons and daughters received land. Therefore, the pattern of transferring land rights is the opposite of that described by Mikell: land rights were initially concentrated among men but are gradually being redistributed to women.

The difference perhaps stems from the fact that Mikell surveyed indigenous communities while the present study focuses on migrant communities. Matrilineal succession would be stronger in indigenous communities than in migrant ones. As a result, in indigenous communities there may be more cases where female-owned farms, after the death of the original owners, are absorbed into lineage land under the supervision of male lineage heads. In migrant communities, on the other hand, those who first migrated into the area and acquired unoccupied land from local chiefs were mostly men. They later brought their wives and worked together on newly established cocoa farms, while the husbands' matrilineal kin contributed little labor to the farms (Hill 1963; Okali 1983). In such situations wives and offspring have a greater claim to the land on which the cocoa farms are established, and thus more chances of acquiring land from husbands and fathers, as discussed in Chapter 3.

## **5. Varying Degrees of Autonomy from Husbands**

The degree of autonomy wives can enjoy in agricultural production varies. Some wives hold their own land and independently manage cocoa farms. Others establish their own cocoa farms on the husband's land. Yet others use the husband's land for food crop production and are allowed to dispose of the products as their own. In order to understand these differences, it is useful to classify degrees of autonomy by considering whether wives have access to and control over products and land. "Having access to products" means that wives can use the products, while "having control over products" means they can decide how to dispose of the products (Overholt et al. 1985; Dixon-Mueller 1985). On the basis of this classification, degrees of autonomy of wives vis-à-vis their husbands can be divided into following five categories (Table 4-4). The degree of autonomy is highest in (1) and lowest in (5). The number of wives in each category is shown in Table 4-5.

### **(1) Full control over land and products**

When a wife holds land independently of her husband, she possesses full control over the land and its products. She can make autonomous decisions on farm management, on the marketing of products, and on the disposal of land rights (Case 4-5 at the end of the chapter). The way female farmers obtain independent land rights varies (Chapter 3, Tables 3-2 through 3-4). If she acquires land from the husband as a gift or by inheritance, consent of the



(3) Usufruct rights to the husband's land for cocoa production and control over products

In some cases, a wife is allowed to use her husband's land to establish her own cocoa farm (Case 4-7). Allowing a wife to establish her own cocoa farm is often seen as a sign that the husband intends to give the land to the wife in the future. This is because planting cocoa means establishing long-term interests in the farm, thus making it more difficult for the husband to reclaim the land. Although the land belongs to her husband, the wife makes all decisions on farm management and has full control over products. Although her rights are similar to those described in (2), a crucial difference is that the wife obtains a usufruct right to the land not through a contractual arrangement but through a marital relation with her husband. Because of this difference, her land rights are less secure than that in (2), because the wife's usufruct rights can be dissolved through divorce or upon the husband's death.

(4) Usufruct rights to the husband's land for food production and control over products

A wife may be allowed to establish her own food farm on her husband's land, and to make decisions on farm management and on product use (Case 4-8). In this case, however, the wife is not allowed by her husband to plant cocoa on the farm. Not allowing the wife to plant cocoa means the husband has no intention to give long-term land rights to the wife. The crucial difference between a food farm and a cocoa farm is the duration of land rights the wife can enjoy. Food crops such as corn and plantain will be harvested within one or two years, and the wife's usufruct rights to her husband's land cease after the harvest. On the other hand, cocoa trees continue bearing fruits for at least twenty-five years. Once the wife, with her husband's approval, establishes a cocoa farm through her own labor and investment, the cocoa trees and profits from them belong to her as long as the farm is well-maintained. Although the land itself is her husband's property, the wife can enjoy a long-term usufruct right to the land. On the other hand, if the wife is allowed to plant only food crops, the wife's usufruct right may be short-term, and the husband's control over the land is much stronger than in the case of a cocoa farm.

(5) No autonomy in farm management and limited access to products

A wife may not be allowed to establish her own farm on her husband's land or to make decisions on farm management. Instead she only works on her husband's farm under his supervision. In some cases, the wife may be allowed to sell the food crops harvested from the husband's farm, and to keep the money for herself (Case 4-9). In other cases the wife may receive an amount

of money after the cocoa harvest as a reward for her labor on the husband's farm. In any case, decision-making power remains in the husband's hands; the wife has no control over land or products and only limited access to products.

The degree of autonomy that women have from their husbands can change, and a woman's age and the duration of her marital relationship seem to be important factors affecting her autonomy. Younger women usually do not hold their own land, and they have little choice other than to work on the husband's farm, as in category (5) above. As a wife becomes older and her continued labor contribution to the farm is recognized by her husband, she may be allowed to use part of the husband's land for cocoa or food production, as in (3) and (4). In some cases where the conjugal relationship is cordial and continues for many years, the husband may give some land to the wife as a gift or may bequeath it to her after his death. She would thereby become an independent farm manager with full control over the land and products, as in category (1) above. In these ways wives may gradually improve their access to and control over land and products as their life stages change. The fact that the average age of wives is highest in category (1) and lowest in (5), as shown in Table 4-5, would seem to indicate a positive correlation between a wife's life cycle and her degree of autonomy from her husband.<sup>6</sup>

## **II. Gender and Labor Arrangements**

Labor arrangements between husband and wife are complex and varied. In this section I argue that the cooperation of spouses in farm work needs to be examined in terms of the opportunity cost of a wife's labor, her expectation of reward, and her allocation of land rights within the household. The main assertions here are that firstly it is fallacious to assume altruistic behavior between wife and husband, and secondly that the arrangement of labor between spouses should be regarded as a result of the unequal access to and control over land rights between husband and wife. Because of this inequality to land rights, some wives are restrained from undertaking independent agricultural production, and are forced to provide labor to their husbands. The analysis begins with the use of case studies to clarify labor supply relationships between spouses. It will then be shown that women's work consists not only of farm work but also of reproductive work and off-farm income earning work, and that working time has to be allocated among these different kinds of work. The arrangement of labor between spouses will then be characterized as a phenomenon that reflects both the opportunity costs of women's work and intra-household power relationship resulting from the uneven distribution of

land rights. Finally, I will examine the differences in labor use between married and unmarried women farmers.

### 1. Labor Exchange between Spouses

As shown in the previous discussion, the basic unit of farm management is the individual. In the context of actual farm work, however, labor is frequently exchanged between husbands and wives. As shown in Tables 4-6, 4-8, and 4-10, most husbands and wives who independently manage their own farms also provide labor on spouses' farms. In Bepoase and Nagore, however, there were married couples who provided no labor on the spouse's farm. It should therefore be noted that the provision of labor between husbands and wives is not a universal practice.

Though it is common for husbands and wives to exchange labor, this does not mean that married couples jointly carry out all farm work. Male farmers show a strong tendency to seek the cooperation of their wives for tasks related to food crop production and cocoa harvesting (Tables 4-7, 4-9, 4-11). On the other hand, women are heavily dependent on their husbands' labor when establishing a new farm, because the task requires physical strength. It is clear that labor exchange between husbands and wives plays an important role in production, but the degree of importance varies according to gender and the types of farm tasks.

In addition to agricultural work, women are culturally responsible for reproductive work. Such work includes, among other tasks, childcare, carrying water, gathering firewood, and preparing meals. The production of food crops for household consumption is part of reproductive work related to meal prepa-

TABLE 4-6  
LABOR EXCHANGE RELATIONS BETWEEN HUSBAND AND WIFE: BEPOASE

Labor Exchange Relations	Both Husband and Wife Holding Cultivated Land		Only Husband Holding Cultivated Land		Only Wife Holding Cultivated Land	
	No. of Cases	%	No. of Cases	%	No. of Cases	%
Mutual exchange	15	100	—	—	—	—
Only husband supplying to wife	0	0	—	—	0	0
Only wife supplying to husband	0	0	13	93	—	—
No exchange	0	0	1	7	—	—
Total	15	100	14	100	—	0

Note: "Cultivated land" means "land holdings" and "land with usufruct rights."

TABLE 4-7  
TYPE OF LABOR SUPPLIED BETWEEN HUSBAND AND WIFE: BEPOASE

Content of Farm Work	Wife to Husband Labor Supply			Husband to Wife Labor Supply		
	<i>N</i>	Cases	%	<i>N</i>	Cases	%
Initial cleaning	29	0	0	16	9	56
Tree felling	29	0	0	16	10	63
Burning	29	1	3	16	14	88
Farm preparation after burning	28	6	21	16	9	56
Planting cocoa	26	17	65	13	9	69
Planting food crops	29	24	83	16	5	31
Weeding	29	21	72	16	6	38
Harvesting food crops	29	27	93	16	4	25
Spraying	24	16	67	7	4	57
Harvesting cocoa pods	27	18	67	7	3	43
Collecting pods	n. a.	n. a.	n. a.	n. a.	n. a.	n. a.
Breaking pods and fermenting beans	27	2	7	7	5	71
Carrying beans to drying place	27	13	48	7	1	14
Drying	27	23	85	7	3	43
Carrying cocoa to buying centers	27	16	59	7	1	14

Note: *N* = number of farmers interviewed.

TABLE 4-8  
LABOR EXCHANGE RELATIONS BETWEEN HUSBAND AND WIFE: NAGORE

Labor Exchange Relations	Both Husband and Wife Holding Cultivated Land		Only Husband Holding Cultivated Land		Only Wife Holding Cultivated Land	
	No. of Cases	%	No. of Cases	%	No. of Cases	%
Mutual exchange	18	62	—	—	—	—
Only husband supplying to wife	2	7	—	—	1	100
Only wife supplying to husband	7	24	25	89	—	—
No exchange	2	7	3	11	0	0
Total	29 <sup>a</sup>	100	28 <sup>b</sup>	100	1	100

Note: "Cultivated land" means "land holdings" and "land with usufruct rights."

<sup>a</sup> Data are unavailable for ten other cases.

<sup>b</sup> Data are unavailable for one other case.

TABLE 4-9  
TYPE OF LABOR SUPPLIED BETWEEN HUSBAND AND WIFE: NAGORE

Content of Farm Work	Wife to Husband Labor Supply			Husband to Wife Labor Supply		
	N	Cases	%	N	Cases	%
Initial cleaning	50	2	4	21	9	43
Tree felling	50	1	2	20	12	60
Burning	50	2	4	21	16	76
Farm preparation after burning	50	5	10	20	13	65
Planting cocoa	48	34	71	20	11	55
Planting food crops	50	48	96	21	9	43
Weeding	50	33	66	21	9	43
Harvesting food crops	50	43	86	21	8	38
Spraying	31	13	42	10	8	80
Harvesting cocoa pods	43	13	30	11	9	82
Collecting pods	43	26	60	11	2	18
Breaking pods and fermenting beans	43	1	2	11	1	9
Carrying beans to drying place	43	3	7	11	1	9
Drying	43	13	30	11	10	91
Carrying cocoa to buying centers	43	4	9	11	3	27

Note: N = number of farmers interviewed.

TABLE 4-10  
LABOR EXCHANGE RELATIONS BETWEEN HUSBAND AND WIFE: GYAHA

Labor Exchange Relations	Both Husband and Wife Holding Cultivated Land		Only Husband Holding Cultivated Land		Only Wife Holding Cultivated Land	
	No. of Cases	%	No. of Cases	%	No. of Cases	%
Mutual exchange	45	86	—	—	—	—
Only husband supplying to wife	1	2	—	—	3	100
Only wife supplying to husband	5	10	43	86	—	—
No exchange	1	2	7	14	0	0
Total	52	100	50 <sup>a</sup>	100	3	100

Note: "Cultivated land" means "land holdings" and "land with usufruct rights."

<sup>a</sup> Data are unavailable for one other case.



TABLE 4-11  
TYPE OF LABOR SUPPLIED BETWEEN HUSBAND AND WIFE: GYAHA

Content of Farm Work	Wife to Husband Labor Supply			Husband to Wife Labor Supply		
	N	Cases	%	N	Cases	%
Initial cleaning	106	19	18	73	35	48
Tree felling	103	3	3	63	39	62
Burning	105	8	8	69	48	70
Farm preparation after burning	98	39	40	62	30	48
Planting cocoa	97	57	59	50	23	46
Planting food crops	105	83	79	73	17	23
Weeding	106	71	67	74	23	31
Harvesting food crops	106	83	78	73	12	16
Spraying	82	40	49	33	24	73
Harvesting cocoa pods	87	41	47	36	25	69
Collecting pods	87	63	72	36	6	17
Breaking pods and fermenting beans	87	16	18	36	13	36
Carrying beans to drying place	87	20	23	36	10	28
Drying	87	39	45	36	15	42
Carrying cocoa to buying centers	87	25	29	36	9	25

Note: N = number of farmers interviewed.

ration, thus women have a wide range of responsibilities for farm work related to food crop production. Food crops for household use are commonly grown on the husband's land, but it is not uncommon for women to use their own land. Wives frequently provide their husbands with labor for the production of food crops, but the reverse situation is uncommon. This is because tasks related to food crop production are seen as part of the reproductive work of food preparation, which is culturally assigned to women.

Women also engage in various off-farm work, such as agricultural wage labor and trading (Tables 4-12, 4-13). In Gyaha, for example, 53 per cent of women farmers earn income through some form of trading activities in the weekly market in the village. Cash income from agricultural wage labor or trading activities is important for women farmers because the money remains under their control.

Thus women farmers engage in agricultural work both on their own and the husband's farm, in reproductive work, and in off-farm income-earning work. Because of this multiplicity of women's work, the provision of unpaid labor on the husband's farm is not an obligation but subject of negotiation. If the wife has sources of income independent from her husband, the opportunity cost of the wife's labor is higher than that of one who has no alternative but

TABLE 4-12  
FARMERS ENGAGING IN AGRICULTURAL WAGE LABOR

Village	Male			Female		
	<i>N</i>	No. of Cases	%	<i>N</i>	No. of Cases	%
Bepoase	55	23	42	32	3	9
Nagore	90	26	29	62	13	21
Gyaha	128	31	24	107	8	7
Total	273	80	29	201	24	12

Note: *N* = number of farmers interviewed.

TABLE 4-13  
FARMERS WITH OFF-FARM INCOME (EXCLUDING AGRICULTURAL WAGE LABOR)

Village	Male			Female		
	<i>N</i>	No. of Cases	%	<i>N</i>	No. of Cases	%
Bepoase	55	10	18	32	5	16
Nagore	90	11	12	62	4	6
Gyaha	128	44	34	107	57	53
Total	273	65	24	201	66	33

Note: *N* = number of farmers interviewed.

work on her husband's farm. As each individual has control over the income earned by himself or herself, incentives to do unpaid labor on the spouse's farm are low if both the wife and husband have separate income streams.

Even where the opportunity cost of the wife's labor is high, she will frequently provide her labor on the husband's farm in expectation of some form of reward (Vellenga 1986; Okali 1983; Dey 1981, 1982). One means of reward is to give the wife some degree of rights in (or income from) the product to which her labor has contributed. For example, some wives are allowed by their husbands to sell food crops and keep the income for themselves. Others receive a predetermined amount of cash (equivalent to a bag of cocoa, for example) from their husbands after harvest. Another way of providing rewards to wives is the transfer, after a long period of labor contribution to the husband's farm, of land rights from husband to wife (Case 4-10).

The uneven distribution of land rights within the household also affects labor exchange between spouses. As shown in Table 4-14, in a significant number of cases land rights exist only on the husband's side. This situation allows husbands with land rights to exercise greater control over their wives'

TABLE 4-14  
ALLOCATION OF LAND RIGHTS BETWEEN HUSBAND AND WIFE

Holding Land	Landholding Rights		Usufruct Rights	
	No. of Cases	%	No. of Cases	%
<b>A. Bepoase</b>				
Both husband and wife	9	31	15	52
Only husband	16	55	14	48
Only wife	0	0	0	0
Neither husband nor wife	4	14	0	0
Total	29	100	29	100
<b>B. Nagore</b>				
Both husband and wife	11	16	31	51
Only husband	18	30	28	46
Only wife	9	15	1	2
Neither husband nor wife	23	38	1	2
Total	61	100	61	100
<b>C. Gyaha</b>				
Both husband and wife	10	9	52	47
Only husband	30	27	51	46
Only wife	4	4	3	3
Neither husband nor wife	67	60	5	5
Total	111	100	111	100

Note: This table cover only husbands and wives who both reside in the village.

labor through their prerogative over such matters as the distribution of income from land and future gifts of land. If the wife has land rights from other sources, such as bequests from her father, the decision about whether or not to supply labor to her husband becomes only one of several choices that she can make after weighing various opportunity costs. If a wife does not have other income sources, however, she has no option but to supply labor to her husband, despite considerable uncertainty about whether or not she will receive any return in the form of land rights acquired from her husband in the future. Where there is no prospect of such benefits, a wife would choose to seek a more independent role in farming by terminating the conjugal relationship (Case 4-11). The provision of labor by wives to their husbands is not simply a form of cooperation, but rather a reflection of husband-wife power relationships linked to the uneven distribution of land rights within households.

## 2. Differences between Married and Unmarried Women

The above discussion suggests that considerable differences exist among

TABLE 4-15  
SOURCES OF LAND ACQUISITION FOR UNMARRIED (SINGLE, DIVORCED, WIDOWED)  
FEMALE FARMERS: THREE-VILLAGE TOTAL

Marital Status	Total Cases of Female Farmers	No. of Landholders <sup>a</sup>	(No. of cases) Sources of Land Acquisition			
			Father	Husband	Other Relatives	Unrelated Persons
Unmarried	58	27	6	14	5	4
Single	9	3	3	—	0	0
Divorce	24	6	1	2	1	2
Widowed	25	18	2	12	4	2
Married	143	54	23	22	14	11
Total	201	81	29	36	19	15

<sup>a</sup> This does not coincide with the total sources of acquisition because some female farmers obtain land from multiple sources.

married women in terms of access to and control over land and products. The most important factors affecting such differences are the allocation of land rights between wife and husband, and the resultant power relations within the household. The question now to be asked is whether any difference exists between married and unmarried (single, divorced, or widowed) women.

Unmarried female farmers are not at a disadvantage vis-à-vis their married counterparts in holding land. Among fifty-eight unmarried female farmers in the three villages studied, twenty-seven women (47 per cent) held their own land (Table 4-15). This percentage is higher than that for married female farmers (38 per cent). The difference stems from the fact that some of the now unmarried women obtained land from deceased or divorced husbands as a gift or by inheritance. These women in “female-headed households”<sup>7</sup> are not the most disadvantaged in terms of landholding.

On the other hand, unmarried female farmers face more labor constraints than their married counterparts. While most married farmers have access to their spouses’ labor for their farm work, unmarried female farmers do not. Faced with this labor constraint, unmarried female farmers need other sources of labor. As Table 4-16 shows, younger unmarried women (under forty years old) tend to rely more on labor exchange groups and siblings than do older women. When they become older and physically weaker, they tend to use more of their mature children’s labor or to employ share tenants for farm work.

Women’s responsibilities in reproductive work and the role of children as a source of labor are also important factors affecting the differences in women’s

TABLE 4-16

TYPES OF LABOR USED BY UNMARRIED FEMALE FARMERS BY AGE GROUP: THREE-VILLAGE TOTAL (%)

Types of Labor Used	Under 40 Years Old ( <i>N</i> = 19)	40 Years Old or Over ( <i>N</i> = 39)
Self	100	92
Sibling(s)	32	3
Offspring	11	64
Task-contracted labor	47	56
Daily-wage labor	26	33
<i>Nnobia</i>	16	0
Communal labor for harvesting	37	49
Share Tenants	0	21
Other	26	23

Note: *N* = number of farmers interviewed.

labor use. Young married women having infants need to spend much time on reproductive work, resulting in less time available for productive work such as agricultural production. Older women, on the other hand, are in a more advantageous position to deploy labor for productive work. They can spend more time on farm work as they become free from childbearing and child rearing. In addition, they can have access to the labor of their mature children for both productive and reproductive tasks. Therefore, older unmarried women who lack a husband's labor can substitute it with mature children's labor, while young unmarried women face the double burden of having no access to a husband's labor and of having less time available for productive work.

## Conclusion

On the basis of interview data from both male and female farmers, this chapter showed the disparity between men and women through the analysis of the unequal distribution of access to and control over land and labor. It has been argued that such disparity is a major cause for the uneven power relationship between wife and husband, and that labor exchange between the two is an outcome of such inequalities within the household. The differences among women farmers have also been examined. Factors affecting such differences are a woman's marital status, age, degree of labor contribution to her husband's farm, and the allocation of land rights within the household.

In most economic analyses, the household has been treated as the basic unit of production, consumption, and income pooling. It has also been assumed that households seek to maximize utility in the same way as individuals.

Under this assumption, the household is considered to be ruled over by a “benevolent dictator” who takes the welfare of all household members into account when making decisions (Becker 1974). Households are also assumed to pool their economic resources and use them for the benefit of all household members, while the allocation of labor within households is determined on the basis of the comparative advantage of work of each household member (Low 1986).

This “unitary” model of the household does not adequately explain the realities of cocoa-growing communities in Ghana. As described above, husbands and wives frequently operate separate farms and rarely pool their incomes. To accurately understand these situations, we need to make individual household members the basic unit for analysis, rather than treating households as single economic entities. In addition, conjugal relationships are not always cooperative and can also be characterized by constant bargaining. Labor exchange and transfer of land rights between spouses are the reflection of both altruism and expectation of rewards. It would of course be excessive to treat each household member as a self-interested individual totally independent from other members (O’Laughlin 1995). It would also be fallacious to assume that household members are always cooperative and altruistic. We therefore need to modify our view of intra-household relationships to reflect the coexistence of conflict and cooperation, independence and interdependence, and self-interest and altruism.

## Cases

### *Case 4-1: Growing cocoa on the husband’s share contracted land*

Adjorshon, a fifty-five-year-old woman in Gyaha, has been developing a cocoa farm since 1994 on part of the land her husband obtained under a *yemayenkye* contract. The land will eventually be subdivided under the land-dividing *yemayenkye* contract with the landlord. Adjorshon will share one-half of her cocoa crop directly (not through her husband) with the landlord until the land is subdivided. Her husband has agreed that the area that she has developed will become hers when the land is subdivided in the future.

### *Case 4-2: Growing cocoa on the husband’s land*

Mary, a twenty-nine-year-old woman in Gyaha, has been developing a cocoa farm since 1992 on part of her husband’s land. The husband has agreed to give her the cocoa farm that she has developed. Mary has relied on her husband’s labor for tasks related to the initial development of the cocoa farm,

such as cutting down trees and clearing the land.

*Case 4-3: Land not inherited after the husband's death*

Martha, a fifty-five-year-old woman in Gyaha, came to Gyaha in 1980 with her husband. Together they developed a cocoa farm on land that was acquired by her husband through a *yemayenkye* contract. However, because Martha had no children with her husband, the cocoa farm was inherited after his death in 1993 by the children of his previous marriage, and Martha received no inheritance at all.

*Case 4-4: Growing cocoa on the husband's land with uncertain future*

Christina, a thirty-two-year-old woman in Gyaha, has developed and run a cocoa farm on her husband's land since 1984. All income from the farm currently goes to Christina, but the landholding rights still remain with her husband. She wants her husband to take the necessary steps (including a ceremony confirming the transfer of land with the presence of witnesses and preparation of documents) in order to avoid a future dispute over the right to the land with her husband's kin group. However, she has not actually proposed this step to her husband yet.

*Case 4-5: A wife with full control over land and products*

Afua, a forty-eight-year-old woman in Gyaha, grows cocoa on land inherited from her father who died in 1981. Her husband has his own separate cocoa farm, and both make their own decisions about the management of their respective farms. Afua currently harvests about two bags of cocoa from her farm and retains all of the resulting income herself. However, she and her husband exchange their labor for farm tasks. Afua provides labor for food crop production and weeding on her husband's farm, and her husband assists her with the harvest on her cocoa farm.

*Case 4-6: A landless wife managing her own farm under contract with a third party*

Akosua, a fifty-year-old woman in Nagore, has developed a cocoa farm under a *yemayenkye* contract concluded with a landlord (who is not a relative) in 1987. The labor that she uses includes hired workers, communal labor, and her husband and children. Her husband has his own cocoa farm, for which he uses an *nhwesoo* share tenant. Akosua and her husband work together for farm tasks related to the production of food crops on the husband's farm.

*Case 4-7: Having a cocoa farm on the husband's land and having decision-making rights*

Juliana, a fifty-three-year-old woman in Gyaha, began to develop a cocoa

farm in 1981 using part of her husband's land. Land rights have remained with the husband, but all of the income from the cocoa farm belongs to Juliana. Since 1995 she has put her farm under the management of an *nhwesoo* share tenant who carries out weeding and the harvesting of cocoa.

*Case 4-8: Having food farm on the husband's land and having decision-making rights*

Margaret, a twenty-five-year-old woman in Gyaha, grows corn on part of a plot covered by a *yemayenkye* contract established by her husband as a share tenant. Her husband undertook the initial tasks of farm development (cutting down trees, burning, etc.), but Margaret has subsequently carried out all farm work herself. Margaret has the right to choose the types of crop to be grown on the farm, and to make decisions about the use of the crops.

*Case 4-9: Having only the right to use crops with the husband's approval*

Agnes, a thirty-six-year-old woman in Gyaha, grows citrus fruit and food crops on her husband's land. The right to make management decisions about the farm rests with her husband. Agnes provides labor for planting, weeding and harvesting. Of the crops grown on the land, she can sell cassava, plantain, and oranges with her husband's permission and is allowed to keep the proceeds. She is also allowed to sell all of the corn and keep the income herself.

*Case 4-10: Land given to the wife during the husband's lifetime*

Janet, a thirty-nine-year-old woman in Gyaha, received a cocoa farm (approximately 0.6 hectares) from her husband in return for labor contributed over many years to the husband's cocoa farm. The land gift was confirmed through a ceremony, for which Janet and her husband returned to their hometown (both of them are matrilineal Kwahu and are from the same hometown). The ceremony was carried out in the presence of Janet's older brother, her husband's mother, his maternal uncle, and his younger sister. In the ceremony Janet presented a bottle of local gin and cash to her husband. (Traditionally, the gifts should be a bottle of gin and one sheep, but Janet's husband wanted a cash gift of equivalent value in place of the sheep.)

*Case 4-11: Aiming to become an independent cocoa grower after divorce*

Emelia, a forty-year-old woman in Gyaha, helped her husband develop a substantial cocoa farm, but he does not share any of the proceeds from the farm with her. She tried to conclude a *yemayenkye* contract with a landlord through her own efforts so that she could secure her own source of income. However, her husband visited the landlord to prevent the establishment of the contract. Emelia divorced her husband in 1995 and moved to Gyaha, where she began to develop a cocoa farm with two paternal relatives under separate



*yemayenkye* contracts. The cocoa trees are still immature and produce no harvest, so she makes a living by purchasing food crops in Gyaha and selling them in the capital, Accra.

## Notes

- 1 The problems of the unitary household model are discussed in detail in Evans (1991), Udry (1996), Smith and Chavas (1997), and Jones (1985, 1986). The issue is approached from anthropological perspectives in Whitehead (1981, 1994) and Wilk (1989, 1994).
- 2 The prevalence of this type of situation in West Africa has long been known and has been highlighted in Hill (1975) and Guyer (1981). The fact that Ghanaian husbands and wives do not pool their incomes has been identified in numerous case studies (e.g., Abu [1983], Clark [1994], Shah [1998], and Whitehead [1981]).
- 3 In Nagore and Gyaha, out of twenty cases in which both husband and wife hold land, only two couples pooled their income.
- 4 Data on landholdings are based on the farmers' own estimations using indigenous measurements.
- 5 It is not uncommon for a husband who gives his wife land or usufruct rights to say that he is doing so for the sake of the offspring from the marriage. In other words, the husband transfers land to the wife in trust for the future of their children. The possibility that the wife will receive land rights is therefore reduced if there are no children.
- 6 An exception is category (2) where wives do not acquire land rights from husbands.
- 7 For a useful discussion of female-headed households, see Peters (1995).